State legislators face pinball payoff probe

By ALLAN KATZ 9-5-73 S-I 1-7

The federal grand jury looking into allegations that former Police Supt. Joseph I. Giarrusso received payoffs from the pinball industry also will probe similar allegations about a number of legislators said to have been given money for pro-pinball votes in the 1970-71 legislative sessions.

The federal grand jury yesterday heard from Harold "Hap" Giarrusso, former police officer and brother of Joseph Giarrusso. Harold Giarrusso was alleged by John Elms Jr., managing partner of TAC Amusement Co., to have been the courier who delivered $30,000 to Joseph Giarrusso when the latter was superintendent of police.

Elms and Lawrence Lagarde Sr., also a managing partner at TAC, dropped a bombshell earlier in the current pinball trial of Dist. Atty. Jim Garrison and two others when the TAC officials told under oath of sending bribes to Joseph Giarrusso.

The former police supjerintendent is scheduled to go before the grand ments to Joseph Giarrusso when Elms

HOWEVER, it was learned that an aspect of the grand jury probe involves allegations that a number of former and present legislators received money from the pinball industry to vote against anti-pinball bills and support pro-pinball bills when these issues were hotly debated during the 1970-71 sessions of the legislature.

U.S. Atty. Gerald J. Gallinghouse declined to comment on that aspect of the investigation, saying, "I won't have anything to say about that at this time."

Other sources say Gallinghouse and his team of prosecutors in the present pinball trial have deliberately kept under wraps various tapes referring to certain legislators gathered during their 1970-71 investigation of the pinball industry.

Presumably, these tapes—gathered by government informer Pershing Gervais who also gathered the tapes being used in the current trial—are being saved for the grand jury.

FOR EXAMPLE, on one tape partially played during the current trial, Louis Boasberg, a pinball company executive who has pleaded guilty in the case, is about to name legislators who aided the pinball industry when Gallinghouse had the tape stopped.

It has been learned the legislators named on that and other tapes include men presently in the legislature and several who either were defeated in the 1971 legislative elections or chose not to run for re-election.

The list of legislators also includes a number outside the New Orleans area.

The new grand jury investigation opens up a new aspect to alleged corruption that grew out of efforts to crack down on illegal pinball gambling.

GALLINGHOUSE and other federal officials learned of the alleged payments to Joseph Giarrusso when Elma and Lagarde agreed to help the government just a week before the current trial got under way.

Sources close to the investigation say the tapes held out in the trial of Garrison, John Aruns Callery and Robert Nims, contain considerable detail about alleged payoffs to members of the legislature.

Another aspect of the grand jury investigation still up in the air is whether any members of the administrations of Mayor Moon Landrieu or former Mayor Victor Schiro will be invited to appear before the grand jury.

At various points in the tapes that have been played, there are references to alleged support at City Hall for illegal pinball activities. But there are no specific allegations in the tapes that anyone at City Hall either in the Schiro administration, which ran the city from 1961-69, or the Landrieu administration, which took over in 1970, received payoffs.